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## JACK ANDERSON

# Americans Said To Participate in Chad Takeover

American mercenaries reportedly participated in the takeover of Chad by Libya's radical ruler, Muammar Qaddafi. In one operation, they helped to ransack the hastily abandoned U.S. Embassy in Chad, intelligence sources believe.

Highly classified documents and coding equipment apparently were delivered into Libyan hands. This was the conclusion of a team of U.S. agents who slipped into Chad last December and checked out the embassy.

"The safe and vault areas had been penetrated," reported Donald Norland, the last American ambassador to Chad. "Papers were strewn around."

He assured my associate Dale Van Atta that no important secrets had been stolen. But intelligence sources said the embassy had been picked over by professional experts "with internal, in-depth knowledge of U.S. Embassy workings and classified intelligence procedures."

One source compared the looting to the work of a professional jewel thief who knows the most valuable jewels to steal from a safe.

The takeover of the U.S. Embassy occurred in March 1980. It attracted little attention at a time when the world was absorbed with the Iranian hostage crisis. But the American personnel vacated the embassy abruptly to escape hostile invaders.

"Our people got out by the skin of their teeth," recalled a State Department official. Declared another: "They left the embassy as if it were a house on fire."

In a telephone interview, Ambassador Norland said the embassy "was not defensible." He got his people out with French help, he said, to safety in Cameroon.

There wasn't even time to carry out a 30-minute emergency drill they had practiced to dispose of secret files. Everything was left behind, including the most sensitive documents and equipment.

Intelligence authorities in Washington are convinced that American mercenaries, some of them with backgrounds in the CIA and Special Forces, assisted in the expert looting of the embassy safes and files.

Witnesses have identified fugitive ex-CIA agent Edwin Wilson as the man who recruited the mercenaries. He now operates a worldwide export-import business from a seaside villa in Libya. His lawyers say he recruited some mercenaries for Qaddafi but had no control over how they were employed.

The witnesses claim that Wilson's

mercenaries conducted more than one operation for Qaddafi inside Chad. At least one commando raid was attempted against the main air base at the capital city of Ndjamena. The mercenaries reportedly swept into the base aboard an American-made DC3 but were driven off.

One of the mercenaries is quoted as saying he flew into Chad several times aboard a DC3, ferrying cargo and troops to the battlefield. He described the missions as "black," an intelligence term meaning they were highly secret and strictly unofficial.

He told of being captured once by Chadian troops, along with four crew members. They expected to be executed. But, unaccountably, they were released after three days to fly back to Libya.

In exchange for Libyan petrodollars, these American soldiers of fortune have served not only Qaddafi but other anti-American dictators, including the Ugandan despot and mass murderer, Idi Amin.

**What Next?**—The Chad civil war began as a dispute between the president and the defense minister. Qaddafi sent his troops to support Pres. Goukouni Oueddei, who ultimately triumphed. Now 6,000 Libyan troops "oversee" Chad in what officials describe as a "shotgun wedding." Using similar tactics, Qaddafi is preparing to send his troops next to back up a dissident faction that seeks to take over Sudan.